

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS

LABOUR- MORE OF THE SAME

Barring completely freak results these three men will represent Hackney in Parliament after May 3rd. Whatever the result of the General Election, it is most unlikely that the safe Labour seats of Hackney North, Central and South will be even slightly threatened by the Tories - or any other party. So Ernie Roberts, Stanley Clinton Davis and Ron Brown can confidently look forward to taking their seats on the comfortable green benches of the House of Commons.

So will there be any change for Hackney? If Labour wins the election then the answer is probably very little. If the Tories win, then there will be change - and it will be for the worse.

We are not going to defend Labour's record in this last government. Some positive things have come out of the last few years, but there's very little for even the most stalwart Labour Party member to be proud of. So inside, on pages 4 and 5, we present a critical view of the last Labour government plus a biased and very unimpartial survey of the local election scene.

Fair and balanced

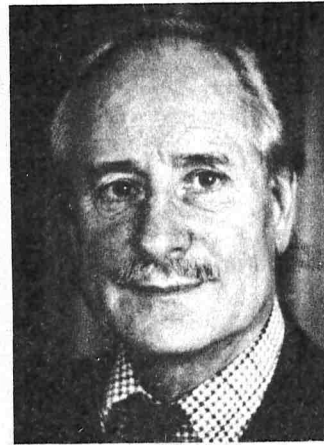
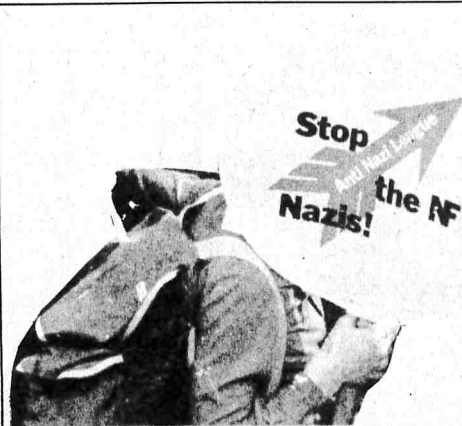
We admit our election coverage is biased for one simple reason. We exist as an alternative to the commercial press acting, we hope, as a focus for local people struggling to win back some control over their own lives. The commercial press, on the whole, pretends to be objective, fair and balanced. Of course, it isn't. Nearly all the national newspapers will urge their readers to vote Conservative on May 3rd, because it is in the interests of their proprietors - the press barons or the multi-national corporations - to do so.

We believe that there is no prospect of real social change whichever government gets in. The opportunity to vote once every four or five years is not real participation in democracy. It is an illusion - and it is in the interests of all political parties to keep up this illusion. No party offers the kind of commitment to real participation that we want to see. No party could, by their very nature.

But we have to face the fact that a Tory Government would be the most reactionary and destructive since the days of Ramsay MacDonald. The Labour Party provides the only practical alternative to the Thatcher threat. The real fight is to get a future Labour government to implement the kind of radical socialist policies which would make a real change to the lives of working people.

ELECTION SPECIAL pages 4 and 5.

At the request of Hackney CRE, the police have agreed to operate a special hotline to help combat racial violence during the election campaign. The number is 488 5261 and will be manned between 7 am and 10pm every day until 2nd May. For emergencies ring the nearest police station but use the special number if you get no response. Also ring HCRE on 986 4121.



ERNIE ROBERTS



STANLEY CLINTON DAVIS



RON BROWN

HACKNEY TEACHER DIES IN POLICE ATTACK



A Hackney teacher was killed on Monday 23 April after being struck by police at an Anti Nazi League demonstration against a National Front meeting in Southall.

He was Blair Peach, a teacher at a special school in Bow, Phoenix School. He was a member of the SWP and an active Anti Nazi campaigner. Witnesses said later the policeman "hit him on the head." One went on: "I remember feeling very angry because he was not part of the others at the top of the street, he was just watching like me."

The policemen were from the crack Special Patrol Group, who are well known for their toughness.

Blair had been told - along with others - to disperse by the police. As he was walking away with two friends they were attacked by the SPG, who went wild, according to another witness.

Blair's wife was with him on the demonstration. The became separated during the earlier fighting and she had gone home only to be summoned back by a phone call. She went to the hospital and was with him when he died around midnight.

Ealing Council had allowed the NF to use Southall Town Hall for an election meeting and a counter-demonstration had been called by a number of organisations, coordinated by the Indian Workers Association, a Southall based group.

The plan was to have organised passive resistance, according to the President of the IWA, Vishnu Sharma. All immigrant groups and small businesses were alerted and shops began closing about

1 pm. However, the massive police presence - estimated at about 4,000 - was a severe provocation of the attempt to organise peaceful resistance and clashes soon began to occur. Over 300 people were eventually arrested, and the demonstration began to disperse.

Some of the demonstrators were herded into side streets near the Town Hall and then the attacks by the Special Patrol Group happened.

Blair was well known in Hackney as an anti-racist campaigner. He was president of the East London Teachers' Association and active in the Teachers' union, the NUT. He had recently appeared on a TV programme about racialism in East London, and after that had been attacked twice on the streets by the National Front.

A teacher who knew him told HPP that his death might drive home to people that the defeat of racialism was not just a matter of confrontation between the Anti Nazi League and the NF, the way it is presented on TV and in the newspapers.

"Blair Peach was a dedicated anti-racist, working for the unification of all people against the National Front. Recently, he had been persuading other local teachers to sign an advertisement to appear in local newspapers declaring their belief in working for all the children in their care, their opposition to the NF and its divisive tactics. This is the kind of positive anti-racist tactic we should all work for - creating the kind of community relations in which the NF cannot prosper."

NEVER AGAIN! MARCH

Sunday 29th April
Assemble Shoreditch
Park, New North Road,
N.1.
1 pm.

FIASCO OVER NEW HACKNEY STATION

A few months ago Hackney Council had to ask British Rail to think again on their plans for a new Ridley Road station. As HPP readers will know, this was after highly effective protests by Ridley Road traders and analysis by voluntary transport groups which showed the proposed station siting to be poor from the passenger viewpoint. This type of shambles came about because insufficient attention was paid by British Rail to local opinion and the geography of the local area and has set back the opening of the station by several months at least.

You might have thought that British Rail would have learnt something from this. You would have been wrong! A similar fiasco is about to be foisted on the Hackney public at Hackney station.

Design

The design for the new Hackney station (to be called Hackney Central) far from making use of the well placed former station building at the corner of Mare Street and Amhurst Road (next to the railway bridge) includes a ticket office and station access sited about 70 yards away on the side of the railway embankment behind the Spurstowe Community Home. Anyone having reached that far, wanting to go to Highbury (to change for the West end) would then have to climb over a footbridge to reach the westbound platform.

The plans show very long sloping uncovered path from the side of the old station building to the proposed new station building with a flight of steps from further up Amhurst Road, meeting it at about halfway. This path is likely to dilute any keenness of passengers getting off, for example, a 253 bus in the Narrow Way to head for a train, especially in some of the winter pavement conditions experienced within the last few months. At many other times, the station

approach will be draughty and uninviting. Neither might the people living in nearby new houses be too keen on being overlooked by passengers entering the proposed station building and may only take heart from the fact that the station appears to have been designed to discourage such passengers.

So all in all we are faced with the prospect which seems to be a typical mess. We have therefore to ask why the design was drawn up as it has been, and what better alterations can be made.

BR policy

On the first point, there were as far as we know, two reasons why use of the old station (or at least its site) was not considered - the alleged BR policy to have track level booking offices on one-person operated stations so that this person can oversee the platforms and secondly the occupation of the old station by stallholders and a small factory. However, at least one rebuilt station (Bourneville) on a new cross-city line in Birmingham has a very similar layout, with street-level booking hall, high-level platforms, to that which would result from using the existing Hackney station building. It is also single-manned. So much for BR policy! If the stallholders problems present more difficulty, since their trading would not be compatible with using the old station for passengers again. There are, however, several vacant premises towards the bottom of the Narrow Way which Hackney Council might help them occupy and which may be more central for trading. Those working in the garment factory could only be pleased to be found premises less adjacent to the thunder of trains.

The original station building extends back far enough to allow internal steps to be built up to the platforms. There is a bricked-up subway to the far platform (the old designers seemed to have more idea than the new ones) which might be reusable, given imagination, even in the short-term a footbridge is provided for passengers. The

interior of the old station building would need alterations to provide a new ticket office, staff room, etc, and the structure itself might need re-roofing and general exterior cleaning. Faced with such a suggestion, BR would undoubtedly tell us such a plan would be too expensive. What they would be trying to tell us, however, is that simple habitation of an existing building at street level is more expensive than a brand new one built on the side of an embankment! The great point in favour of the old station is that it has scope for second stage improvements such as an escalator or lifts to bring it up to tube standards. The BR plans, on the other hand, will give us a hopeless station for the foreseeable future.

Council 'yes'?

Hackney Council Planning Committee will consider the BR plans on May 8. As they are being pushed for a quick decision by BR, it is likely that they will approve them. It is, after all, easier to say yes. However, if they have guts enough, there is one way out for Hackney Council - a way which will allow BR to start building their platforms right away. That is to ask for a temporary station building with access off Amhurst Road and temporary steps to the platforms. This would take the heat off and allow a more satisfactory final design to be investigated. Hackney has waited long enough for such transport improvements and we need to get Hackney Central station right.

HPP readers will probably notice diesel passenger trains, running along the line behind Ridley Road and past Hackney station after May 14. These will be the new North Woolwich/Camden trains which will at present run Mon-Fri only non-stop between Stratford and Canonbury but will call at the new Hackney Wick, Hackney Central and Kingsland High St stations when they are opened sometime in 1980.

Next month: the future of Broad St after the Liverpool St enquiry decision.

Depo Provera investigated

The City and Hackney Community Health Council has a working group which meets regularly to discuss all kinds of matters to do with women's health.

At the moment, we are trying to find out about the use of the injectable birth-control drug, Depo Provera. We know that it is being used in hospitals, and to a lesser extent in the Family Planning service in Hackney. One injection lasts for several months, and that obviously makes it sound very attractive.

should be limited to two circumstances only - when the male partner has recently had a vasectomy, and the woman needs temporary additional protection, or when a woman has had a vaccination for German measles (Rubella) and must not become pregnant.

The CHC would like to know who is being offered this drug in Hackney, in what circumstances and what information is being given to help women make up their own minds if they want to use Depo Provera.

Dangers

There has recently been a lot of controversy about the possible unpleasant side effects and longer-term dangers of this drug. It has been banned altogether in the USA. In Britain, it has not been licensed for long-term use. The Committee on Safety of Medicines has recommended that the short-term use of Depo Provera

Information

If you have been offered Depo Provera, or think you may have been, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Any information you can give us will of course be treated confidentially. Please get in touch with us at the City and Hackney CHC, Shoreditch Health Centre, 210 Kingsland Road, E2, tel 739 6308.

HPP SOULD OUT



Chats Palace was the scene for a rave time when Soulyard (seen above) and Albert's Relatives played for the Hackney People's Press Leggett Fund Appeal on Friday, April 20.

We made a profit of £41, which puts us well on target to make the £100 we need by the end of May.

We need the £100 to pay to charity in settlement of a threatened libel suit against us from Councillor Miles Leggett, after an article we printed last November. Altogether we have now raised

£63, which puts us nearly two-thirds of the way towards our target.

This means that this is your LAST CHANCE to help us meet this target. The continued survival of HPP depends on you helping us pay these damages - to make sure that HPP becomes what we want it to be: an effective fighting paper acting as a focus for community action for the people of Hackney.

We know lots of people were hoping to come to the Chats Palace benefit, but couldn't make it. If you were - or even weren't - then we need the £1 you would have paid then.

PLEASE RUSH your donation now - however small - to Leggett Fund, HPP, c/o 136 Kingsland High Street, E8 to arrive by Friday 19 May. Please make cheques/POs payable to Hackney People's Press.

DON'T JUBILEE'VE THIS...

The new tube line - which will be of absolutely no benefit to the people of Hackney - has been officially renamed the Fleet Line by the Movement Against a Monarchy.

This line will link Stanmore (on the old Bakerloo section) with the newly-named Charing Cross (formerly Strand/Trafalgar Square). The new section runs between the latter and Baker Street, via Green Park and Bond Street.

stickers

To involve the public in this important new change, stickers have been produced bearing the London Transport Underground symbol with the words "Fleet Line" written

across them. Around the edge of the symbol appears the legend "Don't Jubilee've It".

This is believed to be a reference to the unsuccessful attempt of the authorities



to rename the line, known since its inception as the Fleet Line, the "Jubilee Line".

According to official publicity, it was Horace Cutler, Conservative Leader of the GLC, who first gave the Fleet Line its new title. But, interestingly, an LT poster referring to the "Jubilee Line" appeared at Highbury and Islington the day before Cutler's Conservative Council were elected. It seems, then, that had Labour been returned to office they, too, were intending to give it this title.

In a statement, however, MAAM points out that the so-called "Jubilee Line" was neither begun, opened nor completed in Jubilee Year. "Calling it the Jubilee Line," they said, "will only confuse the public, and it would be

distressing for Her Majesty to be associated with such a blatantly inept advertisement for herself".

So, to assist Her Majesty to overcome this regrettable excess of zeal, MAAM has officially issued these stickers, Stage One in an exercise of public participation, with lapel badges planned for Stage Two.

Paris campaign

MAAM points out that since the Paris authorities renamed the Metro station Etoile "Charles de Gaulle" a campaign of public disobedience has been going on. Completely irresponsible elements persist in restoring the original name with felt tip

pens. But MAAM believes that the travelling public may not be convinced by unauthorised inscriptions of this kind.

The stickers are on sale to the general public at £1 for 150 direct from Movement Against a Monarchy, Box M, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1, or from selected bookshops and other outlets. TASTEFULLY DESIGNED - WITH HER MAJESTY IN MIND.

Hackney MAY Gasbag



There isn't a Hackney Gasbag this month, as the reporters are working on the June issue which will be four pages. Here is a picture of some of them preparing their stories. There will be stories on the Rio Cinema, housing in Hackney, an interview at Capital Radio and a photo story.



TRUE CONFESSIONS?

Not many people have heard of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, but its findings could be one of the most important issues of the next decade. It was set up by the Home Secretary after an enquiry into police handling of a murder case, when three youths were released after serving several years of a jail sentence when they were suddenly found to be innocent. It then transpired that the police had forced them - two of them were mentally subnormal - to sign confessions that the police had made up. The Commission will examine all aspects of police handling of suspects, and recommend what legislation should be passed to give the police more powers - or to force the police to keep to the rules that already exist. Many groups have submitted evidence to the Commission, amongst them a group of local lawyers, the Hackney Legal Action Group, who write about what they say below.

A duty rota of solicitors to assist people held in police stations should be set up by the government, argues Hackney Legal Action Group in evidence submitted to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure. The submissions are made in conjunction with Hackney Council for Racial Equality. Hackney Legal Action Group is a group composed primarily of solicitors and barristers, and is a local branch of the national organisation.

The lawyers argue that the present powers of the police are muddled and unclear. These powers should be coded and strictly enforced. The group criticises the evidence submitted to the Commission by Sir David McNee, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, which asks for wider police powers. Hackney LAG believes that the present powers when coded and enforced would be adequate for the work of the police.

Sir David's suggestion that the right of silence be removed is described as "alarming". Hackney LAG states that the right of silence is fundamental to the English system of justice. They draw a clear distinction between professional criminals, who are able to fend for themselves quite well, and the great bulk of suspects who come into contact with the police. They argue that the latter are easily intimidated by the police, and should have access to a solicitor as of right.

Any confessions made in the absence of a lawyer should be ruled inadmissible in court, states the evidence. The group says that "our concern is not to get the guilty person off and avoid

convictions but to avoid, as far as possible, the conviction of innocent persons on the basis of admissions to offences which they did not commit".

The group is not in favour of tape or video recordings of confessions, and believe such recordings could be even worse than the present system, because the police could still apply pressure before the confession, but the recording would not reveal this.

Hackney Council for Racial Equality supports the submissions made by Hackney LAG, but goes on to argue that the problem is not simply a procedural one. They cite cases in which black people are unlawfully arrested, and are especially critical of the way police deal with the enforcement of immigration laws. They state that "the police, in exercising their powers under the various immigration acts, developed a policy which effectively means all black people must carry passports or birth certificated with them, in order to prove their right of residence in the country".

The CRE submits that institutional racism must be eradicated, and suggests that positive steps be taken to recognise the nature of the problem, and in educating the police about minority groups. They believe that immediate steps should be taken to ensure that police officers posted to areas with records of racial tension should be sensitive to the needs and difficulties of that community.

Further proposals for change by Hackney LAG include the establishment of a permanent independent commission to review the work of the police and complaints

made against them; free legal aid should be available for all those accused of criminal offences punishable by a term of imprisonment; the police should give written reasons for denial of access to the accused by family or friends; and a suspect should have a right to see his or her doctor of choice, under a rota to be operated by the National Health Service.

East London Gay Liberation Front

On Thursday March 29, the inaugural meeting of the East London Gay Liberation Front (ELGLF) took place at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road. Despite prior publicity, the turnout was disappointingly small, but a constructive and encouraging meeting was held.

It was generally agreed that there is a need for an East London gay organisation which can offer a broad-based appeal to gays in the area. We thought it very important that efforts should be made to make ELGLF a truly joint group in which gay men and women can exchange views and unite in opposing the oppression of gays, especially in our area of London.

Those present at the meeting did not feel justified in attempting to form anything other than tentative ideas of what the structure of ELGLF should be like. This must be decided by the future membership of the group for themselves. However, it is hoped that ELGLF will attempt to fill the vacuum in gay life in East London by involving its members in three main areas of gay activity.

Firstly, political activity: ELGLF should challenge any anti-gay activity here by the use of effective counter-action. We could also provide support for other gay groups in London. East London gays could monitor the local press and make our protests known to the authors of anti-gay articles. At present there is no vociferous gay group who could claim to speak for East London's gay people.

Secondly, the social life in East London is lamentably lacking if you are gay. We're restricted to a handful of pubs and a couple of clubs. ELGLF could organise discos, parties, outings, or whatever there seems a demand for. If a regular ELGLF meeting took place, speakers could be invited, lending us a broader perspective on gay life and lifestyles and giving us a sense of belonging to the broader gay community.

Thirdly, and very importantly, there are in East London hundreds of lesbians and gay men living lives of isolation and self-oppression. To reach a sympathetic ear, an East London gay must travel into central London. The presence

of a visible gay community in the East End of London could well encourage such gays to make contact with other gay people, perhaps for the first time. Couldn't a primary aim of ELGLF be to set up an East London counselling/befriending service for gays?

The structure of the ELGLF, we thought, should be as democratic and unrestrictive as possible - the initiative for the group's action should come from its membership rather than a "leadership". A strict, bureaucratic framework could be likely to lead to petty power struggles and squabbles, inhibiting members from taking personal initiative and becoming really committed to building up the organisation.

We felt that the potential for a committed group of East London gays is considerable. These plans and more could become transformed into concrete action if only we can get a constructive response from those gay people living in the East End. It's time we took over the responsibility for those East London gays who would most benefit from a local gay community. Let's do it.

Naturalists Club forms

Louise G latt, a zoologist/ youth worker, Ernie Greenwood of 1apledene Resident's Association and Dorothy Wise, ex-Centerprise worker, are starting a natural history club for children in the 10-14 age group. To get the club going the following programme of events have been organised at Centerprise:

Thursday May 10th
6.00 - 8.00 pm

LIVE ANIMALS

belonging to Terry Mills; an educational zoologist. Terry will bring along four small animals and talk about the habits of each one and the family or species that it belongs to.

Thursday May 3rd
6.00 - 8.00 pm

WHALES

Short introduction to the group. Film: "An endangered species" (22 minutes). Talk by Bill Hall, a teacher who knows about whales; he is a member of Friends of the Earth.

Thursday May 17th
6.00 - 8.00 pm

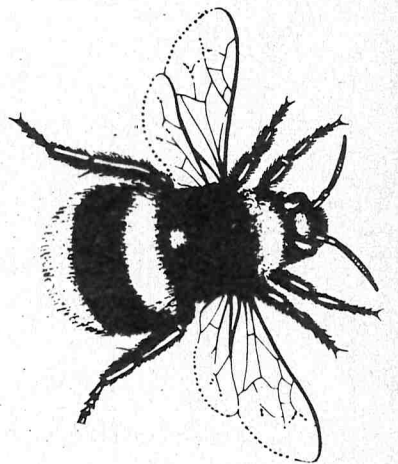
DINOSAURS!

Film "The Terrible Lizards" (7 minutes,

animation)
Slides and talk on Dinosaurs; where did they come from? What happened to them? What were they like? Louise and Ernie are doing this.

Saturday May 19th
Assemble 10.00 am,
Centerprise.

Day trip to zoo. Bring packed lunch £1.00. Return by 5.30



The Labour Record

Few real socialists - or others on the left - will be voting Labour on May 3 with many illusions about the kind of policies they will be backing.

The Labour government just ended has a dismal record on issues of critical effect on thousands of its own supporters, trade unionists, socialists and others fighting for real change to benefit the mass of people in Britain. Unemployment has risen throughout most of Labour's reign, trade unionists have been assured of further restrictions on their right to strike and organise, wages have been suppressed, public and social services have been attacked.

In great areas of policy the difference between the Labour government and the Tories is of degree only - both wish to see less union power, some sort of wage controls (whether statutory or voluntary) and strict limits on public spending for the social services. And of course neither party questions whether or not it is the elected MPs who are governing the country, rather than the multinationals, the property speculators, the private landlords and capitalist managers...whether MPs should be running the country even if these groups of people were not...whether we should be creating the ultimate form of democracy where people govern their own lives rather than have things decided for them by a remote elite, to work together in co-operation rather than in an exploitative and competitive system. The election, in these terms, looks more and more like a battle between two allies.

(In policy, the Liberals, incidentally, do occasionally sound more progressive than Labour. For example, in their desire to replace the Lords with a new elected upper chamber and their strong reservations about nuclear power, something not found among more than a handful of prospective Tory or Labour MPs.)

Those who vote Labour, justifying their action as "the lesser of two evils" in preference to the right-wing brand of Thatcher capitalism, will have to battle hard and long if Labour is returned to power. The Labour government, 1974-79, constantly ignored its own party membership and its loyal trade union supporters. In 1976, for example, the Labour Party conference voted against public spending cuts; three months later Chancellor Healey slashed public spending by £2,500m. The party called for nationalisation of banks and insurance companies instead. This was not done. Equally the Labour government ignored the party conference calls for an end to wage controls.

What the "new" Labour manifesto offers is basically more of the same. The policies of the last government would be the policies of a new Labour government. The manifesto is a considerable step backwards from the more radical platform they fought

on in 1974. Of course, there is the usual stuff about action to turn the dream of a caring society into reality which Labour has been churning out for years, but when it comes to policy the tune is different. Further restrictions on government borrowing are promised, with the inevitable result of more cut-backs in public spending. The



Concordat with the TUC already formulated advocates further wage restraint and restrictions on industrial action such as preventing unofficial action and restricting picketing further. All of which sounds like Thatcherism. The only conclusion can be that Labour leaders have been terrified by the power that has been wielded by the working class, particularly during the winter just past, and that when it comes to those infamous "irreversible shifts of power" once mooted by Callaghan, Healey and the rest, they just step back from the brink.

How would a new Labour government tackle the problem of racism? How did the old one fare? We have seen, during the 74-79 government, a new Race Relations Act, under which the law was supposedly strengthened to enable greater legal steps to be taken against racist actions and improve relations between immigrants and Britons. At the same time, however, relations in the community seem to have deteriorated; racist attacks have been all too common in east London; the NF has not been prevented from offering the insult of a new HQ to Hackney residents. What Labour's answer is to "continue" to protect the black and Asian community against discrimination and racism! (This is what their manifesto says.) And of course they have continued to implement the tough Tory 1971 Immigration Act with their often openly racist immigration officers and their frequently disgusting treatment of immigrants.

The left of the Labour government - the Tribunes - recently seems to have been deafening only in its silence. Their policies are largely omitted from the new manifesto. If Labour is re-elected to power they will have a vital role to play in making the government actually justify the title of "Labour". The Conservative policies on which they are fighting the election will make Benn and his allies more of a laughing stock than Callaghan and his disciples - from whom such moves are of no surprise. They cannot effectively influence policy and turn the Labour government into what it was originally intended to be - the working people's government.

Different positions

Labour

ROBERTS

Hackney North & Stoke Newington

DAVIS

Hackney Central

BROWN

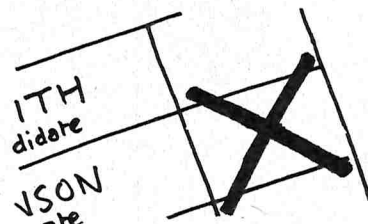
Hackney South & Shoreditch

The three men who are almost certain to be our representatives in the next Parliament differ considerably in their political positions. Stanley Clinton Davis and Ron Brown are standing again in Hackney Central and Hackney South respectively. Stanley Clinton Davis is a junior minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, and has a safe middle of the road reputation. As a government minister he could hardly be expected to do anything but campaign on the party line, defending the government's record and pledging the same as before for the future.

Ron Brown has been the member for Hackney South since 1964 and is perhaps best known for being the brother of ex-Labour leading light Lord George-Brown, who is now responsible for a highly-biased right-wing weekly "commentary" on Capital Radio. Ron Brown's defenders call him a good constituency MP, and he certainly is campaigning on this record for re-election. As a result of his efforts, he says, Hackney is now a partnership area, and has been allocated millions of pounds for rejuvenation of the area. However, he omitted to mention that this

partnership money is just a drop in the ocean, and is hardly likely to make much real difference to the lives of people in the area. Also, as we reported when the partnership scheme was first announced, there was considerable opposition inside the Department of the Environment to Hackney being given partnership status as the DoE thought that Hackney was so badly managed by both Council officers and elected Council members.

Ron Brown's election address is also remarkable for a



brief message from his wife, Mary, who has been photographed in a pose which makes her look remarkably like Margaret Thatcher. She appeals to the housewife directly to "send Ronald back to Westminster".

By contrast, Ernie Roberts is running a very different campaign in Hackney North. He has the dubious distinction of always being singled out by the Tory press as the example of the left/Marxist/Trotskyist/Militant (choose your own derisive adjective which really just means "socialist") takeover of the Labour Party. Certainly if he is elected in a Labour party which loses the election heavily he will be one of the few members left who could justifiably claim to be socialist.

While the Labour party as

a whole is fighting the election on a manifesto which is probably the least socialist since the war (even old proposals like reform of the House of Lords have been dropped), Ernie Roberts identifies it still as a contest between the parties of wealth and privilege and the party of ordinary people. He concentrates his address and the election special issue of his constituency newsletter on what a return to a Thatcher-led Tory government would mean. The threat of a cut of £5,000 million in public spending, the menace of a Tory finger on the nuclear trigger. He lists some of the positive things to come out of the minority Labour government: legislation like the Employment Protection, Equal Pay, Race Relations and Rent Acts.

Ernie Roberts then calls for a future Labour government to commit itself to workers' control at the workplace as the basis of greater democracy, public ownership of banks and finance houses and the land, and moves towards more open government at both local and national levels.

When the three Labour MPs take their seats there will certainly be a very different atmosphere in the House of Commons. Either there will be the most vicious attacks for years on the rights of working people or there will be a Labour party, grateful to get in by the skin of its teeth, and committed to much of the same as before. Then the fight will really start - to get a Labour government to implement socialist policies.

Left dilemma

Communist

GOLDMAN

Hackney North & Stoke Newington

BOYES

Hackney Central

The main problem for Hackney's Communists is how to transfer the strong local support for the party (which is one of the biggest in London) into voting strength in elections.

CP members are active in local campaigns, particularly in the anti-racist struggle and thus it is curious that there is no candidate standing against NF leader Tyndall in Hackney South.

Even more curious is that Monty Goldman is standing in Hackney North, on a platform which says that Communist MPs will have to work with Left Labour MPs to get a Labour government to implement socialist policies.

Each candidate is campaigning for a real socialist alternative to the right-wing Labour manifesto. They call for expansion of the economy and the raising of pay and pensions to stimulate demands for goods. A minimum wage of £60 per week is absolutely necessary,

with shorter holidays and earlier retirement. They want restoration of public spending cuts, subsidies on food and public transport, resistance to Common Market decisions which just force up prices and cuts in arms spending. They also want improved education and housing.

The CP doesn't really think that it has a chance of getting any MPs in the next parliament. It hasn't even put up enough candidates to get itself an election broadcast on TV. The new trend towards openness in the CP and the fairly successful election strategy of the "Eurocommunist" parties on the Continent might lead outsiders to think that the British party might do better to put up far more candidates. who might then have more chance of success and of working with the left of the Labour Party in pushing through a parliamentary approach to socialism.

As it is, however, voters in Hackney North are faced with the dilemma of having two candidates who argue on much the same lines. Those in Hackney South have a choice between the right-wing paternalism of sitting MP Ron Brown, and the Trotskyite WRP candidate. As we said above, it's all very curious.

Revolution appeal

WRP

JOHNSON

Hackney Central

CURTIS

Hackney South & Shoreditch

The Workers Revolutionary Party has two candidates in Hackney standing specifically to speak to the widest possible audience in the working class. They want to arouse the people to the need for a new revolutionary leadership.

Because their programme and solutions are revolutionary they don't expect to get large numbers of votes. More important than votes, they say, are principles. The election will solve nothing: working people will have to face the facts of economic and political life whatever the result.

Their candidate is not standing in Hackney South to oppose NF leader Tyndall. The WRP believes that the Anti Nazi League and the parties which support it have reduced the struggle against racialism to the level of protest and pop festivals. Behind the antics of the NF the real preparation for police-military dictatorship is taking place - with government approval.

The Iron Threat

Conservative

MILLER

Hackney North & Stoke Newington

BENNETT

Hackney Central

EVENNETT

Hackney South & Shoreditch

Conservative Central Office has supplied the usual three identikit young candidates for the election. They were all selected a good long time ago so that they could conduct their customary pre-election campaign, by writing nearly-weekly letters to the Hackney Gazette.

Tim Miller, the Tories' man for Hackney North, even says in his election address that the Gazette's readers will be "familiar" with his "incisive" (should that read "bigoted"?) letters.

On May 4 all three will pen another letter, thanking the voters for the increased number of votes which they will probably get, and pack their bags and set off for a comfortable seat somewhere in the Home Counties, where their brand of right-wing extremism will go down well with the "Daily Telegraph" readers.

Hackney serves as this kind of training ground for young Tory candidates, fresh from Oxford and three years working as an insurance broker or marketing consultant, because it is such a Labour stronghold. They all know that there is only the remotest chance that they will ever win a seat here - but they also know that fighting a hopeless seat will give them experience and a much better chance of getting a safe nomination next time round.

Hackney's Tories are fighting on the same electoral platform as the rest of the Conservative candidates up and down the country. The

Conservative manifesto is distinguished only by being almost completely empty of actual proposals - perhaps so that Margaret Thatcher can't be accused of breaking



her election pledges if she wins. What proposals there are are astonishingly right-wing in their approach. Further cuts in public spending, possible introduction of Health Service charges, curtailing the so-called power of the unions, increased law and order.

In Hackney, these policies will probably pick up some support from people who have seen five years of Labour government do little to help stem the decline of the area. By adding other proposals such as stronger controls on immigration, the Tories are also helping to find support from people who might be tempted to vote for the NF, but who have realised that they are nothing but a bunch of thuggish ex-Nazis.

In Hackney North, Tim Miller is running an extraordinary campaign against Labour candidate Ernie Roberts, who quite properly refuses to get involved in the personal slanging match that Miller appears to want. His election address is a blatant appeal to what he calls "moderates", hoping that Ernie Roberts' well-known left-wing views will scare the middle-of-the-road voter who turned out regularly for 80-year-old David Weitzmann. Thus his address carries an appeal from Joe Lobenstein (our old

mate "Tory Joe", as he is known in the Gazette) who angles carefully for the Jewish vote. "Now that David Weitzmann has retired," he writes, "Tim Miller is the natural choice even for Labour voters."

He then gives a quotation from Ernie Roberts' book on Workers' Control, which calls for the "withering away of the state when all mankind shall be free".

Miller's party colleague in Hackney Central, Nicholas Bennett, told HPP that he was campaigning on three main issues. He believes that economic growth is necessary to put money back into circulation, and that he wants stiffer sentences for crimes of violence and capital punishment for terrorist offences and reform of trade unions with secret ballots, ending the closed shop and limits on picketing. He also believes that strikers should not be allowed social security payments for their families while they are on strike. Any payment should be a loan repayable when the strike is over.

It is worth looking at some other results of a Tory victory. Areas like Hackney will be sorely hit when budgets for community groups, playgroups, legal advice centres and the like will have to be examined. Council house development will be reviewed, private developers will get granted the land previously allocated for council housing. The number of immigrants deported will increase, and families over here already will find it even more difficult to become reunited.

The first to be hit will be those already worst affected. Single-parent families, the old, the low-paid, the unemployed, blacks and Asians. But eventually all will be hit as the Iron Lady grinds us all under her ice-cold heel.

We had intended to fill this space with an article detailing the reasons for not supporting the National Front. However, while we were going to press, events happened fast and we first of all received the article below, written by an Anti Nazi League supporter who attended the NF meeting in Islington Town Hall. Then we received the shock news of the death of Blair Peach - see front page - attacked by police after demonstrating at a NF meeting in Southall.

We decided not to print an anti-National Front article. What is written below speaks for itself and once more another death can be laid at their door. A derisory vote for Tyndall, Webster and their crew will show at last that the anti-racist message has got through: they are nothing but a bunch of Nazi thugs, they have innocent blood on their hands, and they have no place in Hackney or anywhere else.

INSIDE THE NAZI MEETING

We formed an orderly queue to get into the Public Meeting Hall, and waited and waited. Cordonned off by two rows of police with a third row across the road and behind them 44 police horses, we didn't have much choice.

National Front organisers and supporters mysteriously appeared and were able to get in - we weren't. Nobody from the Anti-Nazi League seemed to know what was happening and nobody made any decisions about how to cope with the situation; we were just stuck surrounded by the police registering our token protest.

It became obvious after a while that ANL supporters were getting into the meeting by disappearing and then approaching the entrance, singly, passing a solid line of blue backed by the horses. I left the picket by saying I was going home and then doubled back on the other side of the road and was allowed into the meeting. Going in alone is quite unnerving; there were no police inside the foyer or the hall, just NF stewards. I was searched, then allowed in and made to sit on the left. The gangway was filled with NF stewards, the hall with flags and martial music. I didn't recognise anyone and I felt completely isolated.

By the time the meeting started, there were about 60 frightened ANL supporters and the hall much less than half full. I don't know how many of the NF there were,

as we were cornered off by a row of stewards who stood in the aisle and blocked the view of other people there.

I spent two hours in that hall and it was the most frightening two hours of my life. I managed to get out with a bloody nose and a swollen eye, ran home and shook for the rest of the night. While the chairman was pretending to conduct an orderly meeting, he might have been on another planet. In the body of the hall the level of repressed violence and hate was terrifying. Every time an ANL supporter heckled s/he was winding up a spring. The NF stewards filling the gangway built up a level of hate and violence until it finally exploded. I sat too frightened to heckle, in this sea of violence. I felt that I wouldn't get out without first going to hospital. I couldn't even leave as there were so few of us that it was impossible to leave others behind. It was incongruous that I could be so frightened with hundreds of friends and at least a thousand police, not to mention the horses, within a few hundred yards. But we were cut off with no contact with pickets outside, manoeuvred by the police and the NF, and outnumbered in the meeting.

Out of it I know two things. We must organise as well as the opposition and that the NF are a terrifying bunch of people.

Well-meaning campaign

Liberal

GATES

Hackney North & Stoke Newington

GEORGHIADES

Hackney Central

ROBERTS

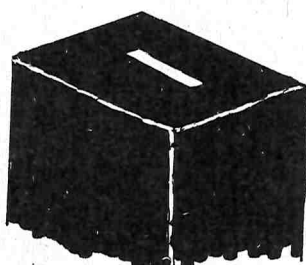
Hackney South & Shoreditch

Unfortunately, the Liberals in Hackney do not show many of the radical tendencies that are apparent in just a few members of their party.

There was a time two or three years ago when it seemed that there was a chance that the Liberals could just become a true libertarian and radical socialist party. However, they have settled back to being what they have always been - nice, well-meaning, essentially moderate. And ineffectual.

In Hackney, the candidates

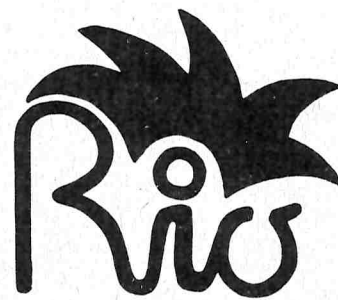
all fall into this category. Despite efforts by at least two of their candidates, Jeffrey Roberts in Hackney South, and Tudor Gates in Hackney North to run the kind of Liberal Focus campaign which won them seven seats on Tower Hamlets Council last May, their election addresses display the kind of archness which might win them awards in some Mr Nice Guy competition, but which seems destined to win them just the usual three lost deposits in this election.



Each candidate displays an alarming tendency to try and take votes from each side, by picking up the sort of policies which they

know the Tories will support, and which, rightly, reflect anxieties that certainly exist in the traditional Labour voter. Thus they call for more law and order, and talk of saving the trade unions from themselves, "their own worst enemies". Even Northern Ireland, where some leading liberals like John Pardoe have called for a complete withdrawal of British troops, is mentioned by Jeffrey Roberts, just as a "subject most English people choose to forget".

All of the Liberals have tried to make an appeal through their now-customary "broken paving stones" community politics approach. Naturally, HPP as a community newspaper, is totally committed to the belief that small communities should have the chance to win back some control and freedom for themselves. It has yet to be proved that Liberal MPs serve their own constituencies better in this way.



MAY

Late show
Sat 5

Sun 6

Mon 7 for
5 days

Thur 10 for
one night

Sat 12, Sun 13

Mon 14 for
6 days

Mon 21

Sun 27

Mon 28 for
6 days

TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE (X) 11pm
and MAN WITH GOLDEN ARM (X)

CHILDREN'S EVENT 3pm

BIM and PRESSURE

ROCK AGAINST RACISM CONCERT
Barry Ford Band, Belt and
Braces and the Spoilsports

OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE (X)
and DISCREET CHARM OF BOURGEOISIE

MIDNIGHT EXPRESS (X)

FIREPOWER (X)

INDIAN FILMS

BLUE COLLAR (X)

The Rio Cinema, 107 Kingsland High Street, London E8. 254 6677

Contact Rio for details of full programme and times.

THE SCHOOLS DEBATE

Continuing the arguments FOR selective closures...

In the second part of his article (the first part was published last month) Colin Ravden continues his argument that selective closure of some schools might be the best of the possibilities being discussed by ILEA about the future of Hackney's secondary education.

Opposite, CHANIE ROSENBERG, another local teacher, argues the opposing view. ILEA will make its final decision on 28 May and we will carry a further story after that date.

Teachers and parents increasingly accept that the number of schools must be reduced. Such a policy does not imply reduction of resources. The total teaching and non-teaching staff of Hackney should be maintained so that classes can be reduced in size and provision improved in all areas where schools are inadequate: reading teaching English as a second language, careers education etc.

Spare secondary resources can also be diverted into other areas of the education service. We could see a huge expansion of nursery education and the admission of all children to primary school in the September before their fifth birthday, improvement of staffing standards in primary schools so that they match secondary schools, increased in-service training for teachers, and employment of enough "supply" teachers to cover all absent staff if the number of teachers were to remain at its present level while secondary rolls fell.

Accommodation

There could also be vastly improved space standards. Hackney schools have two accommodation problems. One is appalling buildings. Of the 15 secondary schools, four are on two sites and one is on three. Of these total 21 sites, eight consist largely or entirely of 19th century buildings.

The other problem is insufficient accommodation, forcing schools to use inappropriate rooms - assembly halls for PE lessons, specialist rooms (such as science labs) for general classroom subjects and vice versa, cloakrooms as classrooms. Many developments they wish to pursue (film rooms, parents' rooms, careers rooms, pupils' rooms), they simply have no space for. And often their curriculum is distorted by their accommodation not enough labs, for example, to give pupils as many science lessons as they need; not enough workshops to enable girls as well as boys to study woodwork; not enough general classrooms to reduce class size.

Given a secondary school population 60 per cent below the officially rated capacity of the buildings, it should be possible to solve both accommodation problems - to dispense with the worst buildings and all the split-site schools while also improving accommodation standards at the remaining schools so that they meet current educational requirements.

Buildings vacated by secondary schools must be preserved for other

educational uses - adult education, community projects, Hackney College, youth clubs. There is a crying need for buildings for such purposes and, by keeping all sites within the educational service, it would be easy to open new schools if secondary rolls ever rose again.

A reduced number of schools need not, therefore, mean educational cutback nor a failure to use falling rolls to achieve staffing and accommodation improvements. Nor need it create problems if the population graph turns upwards. But it does carry two other possible disadvantages - more restricted choice of schools and longer distances to travel to school.

But even if ILEA finally accepts that a reduction in the number of schools (with accompanying improvements in class size and accommodation standards) is the only realistic and educationally progressive option, there is still much to oppose in its specific proposals on how to implement such a policy. Its consultative document suggests:

1. keeping all three denominational schools (Hackney Free, Cardinal Pole, Our Lady's Convent) with very slightly reduced intakes at the first two;
2. amalgamating three mixed schools - Edith Cavell and South Hackney into Shoreditch, which has a large site;
3. amalgamating the other two mixed schools, Woodberry Down and Clissold Park, presumably on the Clissold site which is bigger and better;
4. reducing the three boys' schools (Upton House, Hackney Downs and Brooke House) to two schools - presumably Upton and Hackney Downs, which have two best accommodation and reputations;
5. reducing the four non-denominational girls' schools (Haggerston, Clapton, Dalston Mount and Skinners') to two schools.

Objections

Objections being raised to these specific suggestions take a variety of forms. Some offer a full educational range. The problem with this option is the fate it prescribes for 11-14 year olds. Their schools would be no bigger than most present primary schools and it is unlikely that their educational opportunities would extend much beyond the primary range. These schools probably wouldn't attract the most academically qualified teachers, there would be curricular discontinuity between them and the upper schools and pupils would have to make yet another unsettling break in their school career. Educational thought is increasingly stressing the need to

continue the general unspecialised curriculum of 11-14 year olds into the older year groups: an institutional break after three years of secondary schooling would probably fossilise the present rigid division and perpetuate the over-specialised curriculum that currently prevails for 14-16 year olds.

ILEA's answer to these problems is to federate lower and upper schools into one administrative unit with an integrated curriculum, shared facilities and possibly a joint staff. But insofar as this overcomes the problems of a two-tier system, it creates the problems of multi-site schools: communication problems, time lost in travelling between sites, unbalanced distribution of resources, fragmented policy, a top-heavy administration.

At the very time when depopulation enables ILEA to dispense with its split-site schools, it is seriously considering extending this system to all its schools!

The first of these disadvantages is illusory as real choice hardly exists because of the many denominational and single-sex schools and because of their lopsided geographical distribution. Hardly anyone in Hackney effectively has a choice between two mixed schools or between two girls' schools. The choice is between either a mixed school or a single-sex school and this choice need not disappear.

Increased travel to school will highlight a problem that already exists - too many younger secondary children walking too far on cold, dark winter evenings or spending too much on bus fares. But ILEA has fleets of buses for use during the school day and could easily provide regular services along Hackney's main roads that would overcome these problems.

"Federal" schools

Reducing the number of secondary schools is therefore educationally preferable to keeping them all open. But what about ILEA's third option of "federal" schools, rumoured to be the politicians' favourite policy but supported by absolutely no one else? Essentially it is a hamfisted

political compromise: an attempt to keep all schools open (at least in name) and therefore to preserve apparent breadth of choice and to keep a school within easy reach of all areas of the borough, while at the same time avoiding the most disastrous aspect of tiny schools - inadequate curricular provision for fourth, fifth and sixth formers.

Three tiny 11-14 schools would be linked with one 14-18 school, which would thus have sufficient pupils to object to the strong favour being shown to denominational schools. In 1973, these took 13 per cent of Hackney's pupils. This has grown already to 17 per cent but would increase by 1986 to 28 per cent. As a major argument for controlled school amalgamation is to prevent the voluntary schools achieving a dominant share of the education service, it is nonsense to include such a growth within amalgamation plans!

If the two Catholic schools were merged into one and the C of E school were retained, their combined share of Hackney pupils would be 21 per cent. This must surely be our demand.

Sex bias

A second major complaint with ILEA's proposals is their bias towards single-sex education. Forty-six per cent of non-denominational school places were co-educational in 1973, but this has already dropped to 35 per cent and ILEA's current suggestions for school amalgamation would retain it at this level - far short of their officially proclaimed desire to have 50 per cent of Inner London schools co-educational.

ILEA's attitude seems to be that because parents are choosing single-sex education for their children it would be wrong to impose mixed education upon them. ILEA is ignoring, of course, that the four mixed schools which are shrinking fast have poor reputations not because they are co-educational but because of their secondary modern background. The other three mixed schools have remained full.

If only two mixed county

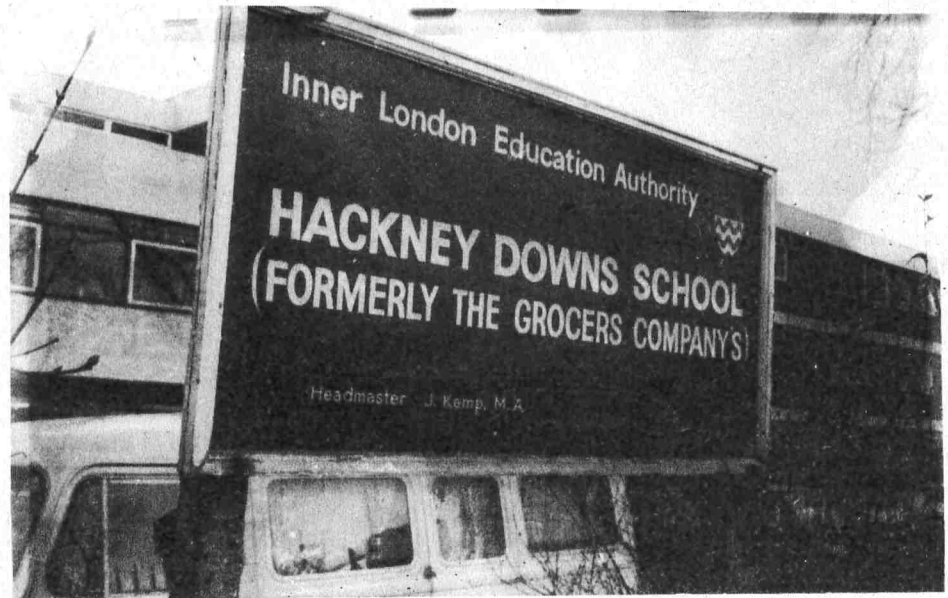
schools are left (at Shoreditch and Clissold Park), the east of the borough would have no mixed provision (apart from denominational schools). Homerton and Hackney Wick children who presently go to South Hackney School are extremely unlikely to travel to Shoreditch or Stoke Newington. This is why the staff and parents of South Hackney are demanding that a mixed school be retained in the east and are suggesting that they amalgamate with Upton House Boys' School to form a new mixed school.

Public esteem

ILEA's suggestions would also fail to overcome the marked variations in public esteem in which schools are held. Amalgamating the three least popular schools (Shoreditch, Edith Cavell and South Hackney) is not going to produce a viable institution. It is doubtful whether the new school on the Shoreditch site would attract many more pupils than Shoreditch now does and thus we would still have the problem of tiny schools or reluctantly allocated pupils. Far better to amalgamate unpopular with popular schools (such as Shoreditch with Haggerston, South Hackney with Upton House) and, as this means combining single-sex with mixed, so much the better!

Yet another objection to ILEA's specific amalgamation suggestions is that they create schools below the 150-pupil intake size which is generally considered to be the minimum educationally acceptable comprehensive size. Our Lady's Convent (90-pupil intake) would continue as a separate school. Hackney Free & Parochial would drop from 150 to 120 pupils to meet accommodation pressure and its governors' wishes. And one of the two boys' schools would have a maximum 120-pupil intake.

Supporters of school amalgamations thus have much to oppose in ILEA's specific suggestions and it is likely that, if ILEA chooses this option at the end of its first consultation period in May, there will still need to be a hard-fought campaign around its precise recommendations in June.



... and against.

A FAIR CHANCE

In writing this article, I have made free use of a previous document with the same title, written by Colin Ravden (undated, but about 1972) for the Hackney Schools Campaign. It was produced to counter a previous attempt by the ILEA to amalgamate and close schools in Hackney and Tower Hamlets. It played an important part in a campaign to prevent the closure of Edith Cavell. I supported his document then and still do. Colin Ravden clearly does not.

We want all children to have the same chances. In London, Hackney suffers more than nearly all the other boroughs from grave social problems. To take just a few examples: in one ward, Rectory, one third of the families have only one parent, which puts a greater strain on the members of the family. The under-fives provision is very poor. There are only 927 full-time and 521 part-time nursery places in the whole borough, although the births in one year alone, 1977-8, were 2886.

That is why Hackney needs schools that have far better provision than more well-off areas, to help Hackney children bridge the gap. Falling pupil numbers provide a unique opportunity to improve their chances in life. **SMALLER CLASSES**

The first big improvement we can achieve is smaller classes. The reasons for this demand are:

1. The spread of newer educational ideas, such as mixed-ability teaching in unstreamed classes, requires smaller classes in order to be successful. It is impossible for a teacher to circulate among 30 pupils (the size of class in the first three years of secondary school) in a short lesson and give attention to all.
2. Also the teacher must know each pupil's ability much more closely than was necessary in the days of streamed classes, when the whole class was taught as one.
3. Modern discipline is based on good relationships and understanding between teachers and pupils. These are possible only with smaller classes. Big classes mean the big stick. It is difficult to adopt modern methods of discipline, just as of teaching, while class size remains so large.
4. All the social problems of our area reflect themselves inside the classroom. Frustration at bad living conditions and home difficulties are acted out in the classroom in the form of anti-social and disruptive behaviour (and of truancy), which causes pupils to fall behind in their work, thus requiring extra help. Our high proportion of pupils of below average attainment also makes extra demands on the teacher. Even the most experienced, able and sympathetic teachers find difficulties.
5. Research has shown that if teachers and parents expect their children to do well,

they probably will, if they expect them to do badly they more likely will. In large classes where keeping order takes up time, it is more difficult to show pupils that they can reach a high standard of work. And yet accepting lower standards lowers the pupils' expectations and leads to a lower achievement of work.

6. Much smaller classes with more time to help each pupil would help bring better results and encourage many more pupils to stay on at school into the sixth form.

Great waste

It is estimated that there are at least 40,000 trained teachers in Britain who cannot find teaching jobs in schools. This is a great waste. After suffering from a shortage for many years, the ILEA should take advantage of this situation. Hackney needs a more generous supply of teachers than it has. Besides getting classes smaller, they are needed for other educational developments, and these are listed below.

More withdrawal groups of pupils taken out of lessons to get specialised coaching for difficulties with such matters as reading, English language and so on.

Withdrawal units in each school for highly-disturbed pupils.

To offer a large number of subjects for older pupils to choose from. To undertake counselling of pupils, and to look after their welfare. To provide for the smaller groups in the sixth form.

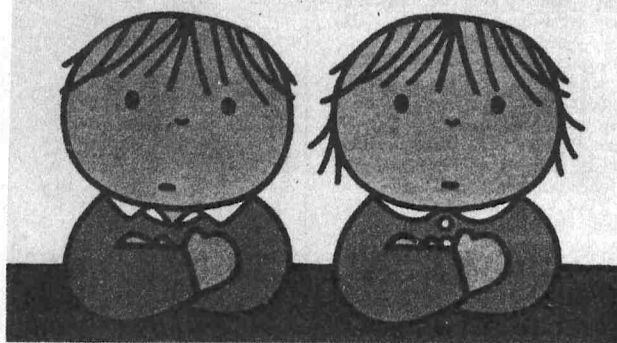
MORE ACCOMMODATION

Of all the factors restricting education at the moment, few are as great as the chronic lack of accommodation. Nearly all local secondary schools complain of not enough room to split classes, insufficient playground space, specialist rooms to teach other subjects, teaching taking place in cloakrooms and halls and lack of stockrooms, office accommodation and staff rooms.

We need to use the population fall to ease the pressure on space at each school, and not amalgamate schools and thus keep them as crowded as now. And we should be thinking not only of ending our present disadvantages. There are also many advances that schools wish to make that are held up simply through lack of accommodation. These include careers rooms, new types of specialist rooms, such as computer rooms or language laboratories, resource centres, projectors, withdrawal units for particularly difficult children, study and common rooms, libraries for younger pupils, interview rooms for parents and also rooms for parents to extend their own education, rooms for under-fives provision and rooms for community groups.

SCHOOLS TO SERVE EACH LOCALITY

We think each community should be served by its own school for the reasons outlined below.



Travel difficulties. With fewer schools and Hackney's poor public transport, children could spend 1½ hours a day getting to and from school. School buses cannot solve this problem: children would be too widely dispersed, and the number of out-of-school-hours activities vital to a comprehensive school would make a bus timetable impossible. Many parents prefer their children to come home at dinner time or to be close enough to pick up younger brothers and sisters from primary schools. They are also much more likely to participate in school functions or visit the school if it is close to home. Truancy difficulties will be aggravated if more children travel longer distances to school. Truants are unwilling to go to school: the more difficult it is to go, the less willing they will be.

Secondary schools are community centres which provide facilities for evening classes, public halls and youth clubs. **SMALLER SCHOOLS**

Introducing the improvements suggested in this article would result in 15 smaller comprehensive schools in Hackney, whose size would gradually dwindle down to, in its lowest year (about 1986) between just under 500 and 600 pupils. Many schools in this country and abroad are of this size, including some maintained by the ILEA as a matter of policy.

The average size of comprehensive schools has fallen from 1800 to 900 over the years. During this time, standards have risen significantly, even if measured only by examination results. Between 1966 and 1974, during which years comprehensive schools spread rapidly throughout England and Wales, the percentage of school leavers from comprehensive schools with at least one O-level pass (or CSE Grade 1) rose from 31.6 to 56.2.

The reasons why we are opposed to the closure of any school in Hackney are set out below. It would leave huge areas without any school. It would leave other areas with only denominational schools. Amalgamating schools would keep the new schools as crowded as they are now, or more so. When the secondary school population begins to rise again, as the rising birth rate indicates it may soon after 1986, a reduced number of schools will create acute problems of space.

Smaller schools with plenty of space allow for a flexible and imaginative use of school

for educational purposes and for the benefit of the community, so badly needed in Hackney. Some more insecure pupils are greatly disturbed by the transfer from a small primary school to a large secondary. This can lead to the pupil not making progress, being difficult or staying away from school. **DEALING WITH OBJECTIONS TO SMALLER SCHOOLS -- Options.**

Some people are pressing for amalgamations of schools, one suggestion being to reduce the 15 existing schools to 8 - 5 large county schools and three voluntary. They say the reason for comprehensive schools coming into being was to offer a wide range of subjects for pupils to choose from in their fourth year and upwards. This is not so. Comprehensive schools came into being in order to end the selection of one fifth of the children to go to grammar schools with better opportunities, and rejection of four fifths of the children who went to secondary modern schools with worse opportunities.

Broadening

The introduction of subject options was an addition to non-selection at eleven-plus. It was the outcome of an attempt to broaden the education particularly of working class children.

Small schools do not need to reduce the number of options offered because keeping all the teachers will keep the options and most teachers are usually specialists in at least two school subjects.

Also further education colleges offer practical subjects not offered by the school and employment of specialist teachers can be extended. **SIZE OF TEACHING GROUP**

Another objection is that some option groups would be too small to provide the academic stimulation that pupils require from others in the class.

This is nonsense. Those who can buy what they consider the best education always choose the smallest possible classes very often in small schools.

What our Hackney pupils want more than anything else is the maximum amount of teacher time throughout their schooling to help them progress.

PARENTAL CHOICE

Some people, and the ILEA, say the "free market forces" of parental choice will force school closures by boosting popular schools and reducing the intake of unpopular ones. The law backs parental choice and it would

need to be changed to alter the situation.

Many parents who have wanted to get their child into a particular school and failed will be surprised to hear what power they have. In reality, the whole argument is largely a myth, for the following reasons.

Most parents listen to the primary head who recommends a particular school. At the same time the ILEA is able to change a bad public image of a school in a variety of ways: by giving extra resources, by attractive innovations (eg a language lab,) by using the retirement of a head to steer the school along different lines, and so on. London abounds in examples of this sort. The vast majority of parents accept the head's advice. A small number who do not get their school of first choice are unhappy, but accept a second choice. A few refuse to accept and keep their children at home, one or two even think of going to court and invoking the law. But to hide behind the law by exaggerating its influence gives a false picture of the Hackney situation.

To overcome any problems free parental choice poses, the ILEA should keep all schools open and bring them all up to a high level of staffing and resources. **TEACHERS' CAREER PROSPECTS**

It is suggested that small schools would discourage good teachers from working in them, as promotion prospects would be fewer.

This is a poor argument. The 40,000 unemployed teachers in the country would be glad of a job in any school. Besides, the population is falling in most parts of the country, so nowhere are career prospects cheery.

In any case, conditions prove a greater deterrent to teaching in Inner London than money. This is shown by the fact that more teachers leave London schools every year than the falling population would displace.

SIXTH FORM

Well-provided schools should encourage greater numbers to stay on in the sixth form. We believe there can be a second sixth form "explosion" as there was with the introduction of comprehensive schooling. We therefore hope each school can preserve its own sixth form.

However, it is not necessary to take major decisions now. The situation will need to be monitored year by year and decisions regarding sixth form provision taken in the light of experience.

CONCLUSION

Unlike those who are prepared to retreat before the worsening quality of life that the fall in population reflects, we want to use the fall to improve Hackney schools in what would be a major step forward in the history of Hackney's education.

Chanie Rosenberg,
"Hackney Schools Stay OK"
Campaign.

Smalley in a state

The Smalley Estate lies between Stoke Newington High Street and Stoke Newington Common. It was planned in 1970 as "...the cheapest and quickest form of development to build". This was at the time of a movement from those other "cheap and quick" developments - tower blocks. The estate cost £3.7 million to build, designed by the Borough architects and built by the Direct Labour Organisation. Now 18 months after tenants moved in one in three tenants have complained about serious dampness. It was to discuss these complaints that a public meeting was held at the Family Centre on April 11.

Council officers and councillors are shy, retiring creatures, so it is a rare occasion to see them outside their cosy nests at the Town Hall to account for their activities. On their performance and reception it seems unlikely that they will venture out again in the near future if they can help it.

They were certainly out in force. On the platform were Alan White, Chief Environmental Health Officer, Bob Young, the assistant Chief Housing Officer, Tony Watts, the Assistant Chief Executive and a Mr Manson of the architects' department. Hiding away in a corner was Councillor Cable, the Chairperson of the Housing Management Committee.

Facing them were about 40 very angry tenants, and it was soon apparent that if the officers wanted a meeting as smooth as their suits they weren't going to get it.

JARGON

The officers started by explaining what they planned to do to remedy the faults and what they were going to offer tenants. An independent consultant had been engaged to present a report by May as to the cause of the problems; where the Council feel that the tenants' present accommodation is unsuitable they will be offered temporary or permanent alternative accommodation; any "reasonable" claims for compensation will be "entertained". It was when questions were directed as to why it has taken so long for any action from the Council that the officers started to sweat under their collars. They denied that it had anything to do with threatened legal action though in a confidential Council report it was admitted that it "would not be appropriate to defend the legal action against the Council". When it was asked if there were any similarities with the Spenser Grove Estate, which seemed to have similar problems about one to two years ago, the smooth architect replied in a jargon that no one could understand, saying there wasn't, also that the problems of dampness are very "complex". Unfortunately for him there was an independent environmental health inspector in the meeting who swiftly debunked that argu-

ment. He said that the architects could learn from a "10p leaflet on condensation that the estate was badly designed". From there on, the architect started backtracking as fast as he could, saying then that the problem was with the ministry, whose cost limits didn't allow for heaters to be put in bedrooms. The result of this being tenants having the "luxury" of their very own sauna on the first floor, complete with a running shower on the walls upstairs. Most disturbing of all was the admission by Bob Young that a further 600 dwellings of the same design had been approved just two weeks before the public meeting which was not going to be halted. The building programme has to go ahead, new slums for old.

VIOLINS

It was at this point in the meeting that the violins and handkerchiefs came out as Bob Young told the meeting how much the Council "cares". The tenants were, not surprisingly, sceptical. Mr Sam Lazarus told how he and his wife who suffer from chronic arthritis had waited 27 years for a council flat. A letter from the Council to them about their request for a transfer on medical grounds was read out, saying that their medical conditions did not warrant a transfer and that the Council insurers could not see how the Council were "negligent" for a bed rotting away from the dampness. Then Tony Watts pulled out all the plugs by telling everyone how well off they were. Where he comes from in Wales, there's "real deprivation". He must have been comparing the Smalley Estate with the pits, in which case he might just have been right, but at least the miners don't have to live in the pits as well as work in them. Alan White then waded in saying that, of course, private accommodation suffers far more from such problems than the Smalley Estate. From what some of the tenants said of their experience of private accommodation and the Smalley, there wasn't much to choose between them.

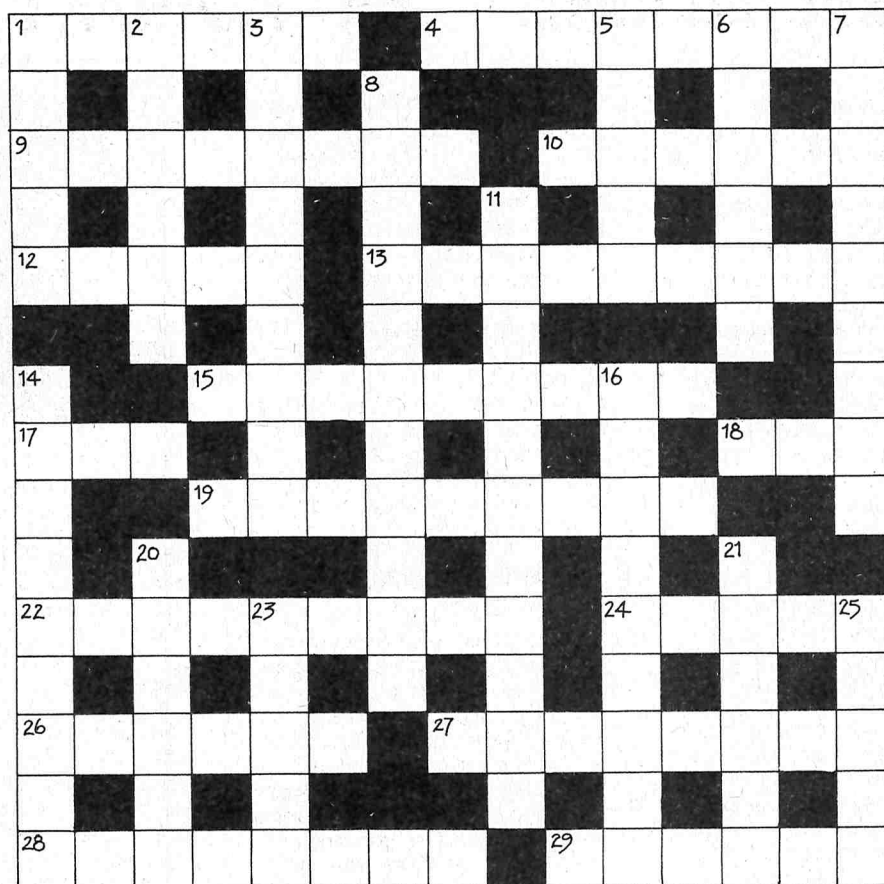
WAFFLE

However in some ways it was a bit unfair that the officers picked up all the flack and Councillor Cable only rose a couple of times to waffle away the questions put at him.

The meeting finished with the tenants forming a tenants association and the officers promising to meet again at a public meeting six weeks hence.

It's certainly something to look forward to. Will Councillor Cable manage to answer a question? Will Tony Watts carry on with his tales of "real" deprivation? What progress would they have made? Will they really care once the election is over?

HPP Crossword No.6



ACROSS

1. Eagerly lay out about sixpence in old money (6)
4. Overcome, redskin is gripped by Peg's return (3,2,3)
9. Where cool cats take the plunge? (3,5)
10. You need a doctor? I'd come out (6)
12. Clear skin (5)
13. Entire can of fruit? (9)
15. Post Christmas present - here? (6,3)
17. Goal when the final whistle blows (3)
18. A Texan, for instance, would know this well (3)
19. Good rates arranged for actor's entrance (5,4)
22. Trendy van really going places (2,7)
24. Somehow, Napier's not as mature (5)
26. One? I'd enter 199 sharp! (6)
27. Bureaucrat sold out the Italian-American spies inside (8)
28. Tension-building Oriental designs (8)
29. Dispatched railway guard... (6)

DOWN

1. ...as she, perhaps, remains (5)
2. Part of our income from abroad (6)
3. With which pencils are covered? (4,5)
5. The 17 of the Greeks (5)
6. Leaders of Tory residents in Victoria individually active producing unimportant matters (6)
7. What's to pay if you give William a ring? (5,4)
8. He knows his noses! (11)
11. Petrified when f-fascist somehow takes in communist (6,5)
14. Give air to etna you've lit? Not you! (9)
16. Among the honours I'd earned for us... (2,3,4)
20. Stockwell train initially on Circle Line (6)
21. Run unusual trips round Norway's capital (6)
23. Strange one? Right! (5)
25. She found a measure in New York (5)

Solution to HPP Crossword No. 5

ACROSS

1. Sikhs 4. Expletive 9. Debatable 10. Rotor 11. Public-relations 12. Cringe 14. Adam Bede 17. Sediment 19. Statue 22. Hackney carriage 24. Prior 25. Frankness 26. Small arms 27. Yield

DOWN

2. Kebab 3. Sitting 4. Embark 5. Preclude 6. Erratum 7. Introvert 8. Earns 9. Depicts 13. Indo-China 15. Elevens 16 and 23. An eye for an eye 18. Mineral 20. Turnkey 21. Canals 22. Hopes

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS is an alternative non-profit making monthly newspaper produced by an open group of people who live or work in Hackney. We publish this paper because we believe that Hackney needs an alternative to the commercial press to serve the real interests of its people. We have no editor, no shareholders, no commercial advertising and no party political backing.

HPP is your newspaper: anyone who lives or works in Hackney is welcome to come and help us. No one is paid by the paper and all decisions are made collectively.

We hold meetings every Monday (except the last one in each month) at 8pm in Centreprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, E8. You can come along to one of these meetings and volunteer to help us produce, write or sell the next issue - or simply tell us what you think of the paper.

If you can't come one Monday

then write to us c/o Centreprise or ring 249 0311 any evening or weekend.

HPP is sold through various newsagents and other outlets throughout Hackney. If you think that your newsagent would like to sell it, on sale or return, then please contact us. And if you don't think that you can spare the time to become more fully involved, but you enjoy reading the paper and think more people should read it, then please get in touch if you are willing to sell a few copies to your friends or neighbours or at meetings.